The Builder.

No. CXCII.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1846.

THE public have heard with astonishment, that a lofty hoarding is already in progress of erection round the front of Buckingham Palace, with a view to the commencement of the proposed additions and alterations.* We look on this haste as positively indecorous, considering the manner in which public opinion, on this subject, has been expressed, and, in an artistical point of view, as foreboding an unsatisfactory result. We expressed our fear in August last, that the works would be so far advanced before the next session of Parliament as to afford a strong argument against any change,† but still hoped that our fear might not be realized. The hasty vote of money was much to be deplored. As we then said, "there was no satisfactory assurance before the house, that the building could be made quite fit for its purposes by the expenditure proposed, but moved to pity and indignation by the architect's touching picture of their royal mistress's miserable home, they at once, in a fine frenzy of loyalty, cried 'aye' to the question, in spite of the warning voice of Mr. Hume, and began to think of its *inexpediency* directly afterwards."

We did hope, however, that no advantage would be taken of this; and, at all events, had a *right* to expect that if the additions were quite determined on, the arrangement and design would be carefully and fully considered, so as to make the expenditure productive of as much good as possible, however unlikely it was that the palace could be made fit for its purpose. The present unseemly haste, and other circumstances within our knowledge, seem to shew that even this will not be the case.

Experience is valueless: example has no effect. All that was said when the present palace was in progress (and which, if attended to, might have enabled us to shew something better for more than a million of money, than we now can), will have to be urged again, and perhaps with no better effect. Sir Frederick Trench, when he drew the attention of the House to the expenditure which was being made at Buckingham Palace, in 1832, said he had applied for permission to see what the plans were, so that he might call the attention of the public to them, and had been refused. The public themselves asked respectfully to know what was being done with their money in a case where the national taste was concerned, but were entirely disregarded. Mr. Hunt said in the House on the occasion already alluded to, "The people certainly *ought* to be satisfied that this will be made a fit residence for the monarch, before they expend more money upon a filthy hole, surrounded by all sorts of nuisances."‡ They were not satisfied, but their money was unwisely and inefficiently squandered, as is fully proved by the present proposal to spend more, in order to render the building simply habitable,—to render it honourable to the nation is quite out of the question.

With such a result before their eyes, why should the public be asked again to remain in contented ignorance, until more bad taste and more caprices be perpetuated in stone and marble? Moreover, will they do so?—especially when they learn what we now tell them, namely, that at this moment not only are they (the public) in the dark, as to the goodness or otherwise of the design, but that her Majesty and the Government are so also; and to the best of our knowledge, that Mr. Blore himself, has not yet quite made up his mind what it is to be. Estimate or calculation there is none: how can there be?—for, as we verily believe, and we are not speaking carelessly, there are no correct drawings yet ready. Whether the additions will cost a quarter of a million, or half a million, or a whole million, we defy the architect to say, excepting that he may make his plans to accord with an estimate, instead of making an estimate of the cost of carrying out his plans. The sum named in the House, when the grant was voted, means nothing; and on this ground alone the public have a right to ask for more precise information before the works be proceeded with.

Plans were made some time ago, but the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the subject, and of whom Lord de Grey is, we believe, the presiding spirit, threw these aside, and gave fresh suggestions, which are to be acted on. We have seen what we have every reason to think is the only design yet prepared in accordance with these suggestions. Some will wonder how;—suffice it to say, we have many eyes and keep them open.

The intention, as it now stands, is to erect a long rectangular building from north to south, in a line with the front of the present palace, close up to the wings, and extending past them on either side (thus inclosing a quadrangular court), and to build a ball-room for state occasions, and other rooms, on the south side of the old building. The drawing in question was to a small scale, quite insufficient for a decision,—probably is so regarded by the architect, who would scarcely like to be bound by it, or have it criticised, and yet the builder is appointed, a very good one by the way, Mr. Thomas Cubitt,* the hoarding is being put up, the seventy thousand pounds' worth of marble—arch is to come down, although what is to be done with it seems uncertain, and the works are to go on at least one stage.

Now, against such a mode of proceeding we are bound by our duty to the public, to protest most strongly, and further, to require on their part, that such consideration shall be given to the subject as its importance demands, and that the people receive a satisfactory assurance that the palace, when completed, will be a fit residence for the monarch, and a structure not unworthy of the nation.

The illustrious personages whose convenience is in question, are understood to have expressed some such opinion as this:—"We do not for ourselves require a new palace; what we want is, immediate accommodation; and this could not wisely be given by a new palace. The plans for such a structure should be maturely considered; two or three years would probably not be too long a period for the preparation of proper plans, and eight or ten years would be occupied in building it. This would be too long to bear present inconveniences, but should the country determine for its own sake on having a new palace, it is to be hoped that no undue haste will be allowed to interfere with its beauty and excellence."

The wisdom of this observation requires no remark on our part; it would be presumptuous for us to say how much we respect the sound sense and proper feeling it displays.

We commend it to the consideration of Mr. Blore and the commissioners. If the addition *must* be made to Buckingham Palace, if half a million more must be spent here, at least do it with some propriety, even though immediate accommodation is required. Let us have carefully considered drawings and perspective views—models too; and take some little time to hear what objections may be urged. Once up, a building lasts for a long time to disgrace or ennoble. The improvement of a palace does not offer itself every day, and demands care, knowledge, and genius. What is undertaken in haste is sometimes repented at leisure.

* We have received several letters on the subject: one will be found on another page.

† See page 409, *ante*.

‡ "Mirror of Parliament," Part CXLIII.

* Mr. Cubitt has been fortunate in obtaining the confidence of Those whose good opinion is of greater value than that given by casual passers above.

PRINCIPLES OF ART

CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE DECORATION OF ROOMS.

"Still follow sense, of every art the soul."

AN apartment without some attempt at embellishment, would be a difficult thing to meet with. Rooms, with extravagant or tasteless ornament upon their walls, or with ill-designed ceilings and cornices, are common enough; but some evidence of a love of decoration is met with every where, even in an attic or a lumber room. The walls, here, may have a common pattern of paper, and the mouldings of the cornice and skirting may be few and misshapen, but *there was* the desire to get as much of good effect as circumstances or funds would allow. Therefore, a knowledge of interior decoration is applicable in every part of a house; for it is seen that beauty of form and colour would be agreeable in situations, where display would not be needed. The dining and drawing rooms are embellished for the purposes of the entertainment, but every where else there is an attempt to gratify the love of beauty, which is universally implanted. Since these attempts are constantly complete failures, to consider how all this outlay may be rendered subservient to the objects there intended, becomes a matter of no small importance, as well as to render more important attempts remarkable for something beyond the amount they have cost. Form and colour, when directed by the hand of art, gratify the love of beauty; otherwise they are merely evidences of extravagance, greater in any case, than in the most elaborately decorated apartment, where the enrichments have been regulated by the principles of taste. Beauty, it cannot be too often repeated, is almost in every case cheaper than deformity. Consequently, it is important that such principles should become familiar to that numerous class, who, in one way or other, have the opportunity of influencing popular taste. Not only upholsterers and decorators, but the manufacturers of furniture, of carpets, of paperhangings, of ironwork; plasterers, glaziers, and joiners have all more opportunities of supplying the demand for beauty of form and colour, than are warranted by their familiarity with art. Though we have argued, that the artist should be the designer of every thing that can be included within the field of art, and that the properly qualified architect should be applied to in every department of interior decoration, it nevertheless does commonly happen, that such materials and forms as can be supplied by the manufacturer, are the best which the circumstances of the case will admit of. Grates, paperhangings, or carpets must, in most cases, be purchased, not executed to order; and it must often mortify him who has a high estimate of his art, to see the means by which his design could be completed, and yet to know that his doing so, in a manner at all reconcileable with correct principles, would be a thing quite impossible to accomplish. Much as architects have neglected to interfere in those branches of art which minister to interior decoration, and little as they are still too often qualified to inculcate, by precept, or the actual production of designs, the principles we desiderate; the studies with which they are familiar, would readily place them in a far more favourable position for disseminating sound appreciation of the beautiful, than the

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